

## CHAPTER 9

ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM JOSEPH WALSH: 'A GREAT IRISHMAN AND A GREAT CHURCHMAN'<sup>1</sup>*Daithí Ó Corráin***1. Introduction.**

To contemporaries he appeared more an institution than a man. Though he claimed no inclination towards the episcopate and preferred academic work, he was *the* preeminent Irish Catholic prelate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Archbishop William Joseph Walsh of Dublin was a commanding national figure who helped shape modern Ireland through his powerful advocacy of agrarian reform and home rule, tenacious championing of Catholic educational interests, and intuitive understanding of the dangers of alienating the laity. Although Irish historiography has been transformed since Shane Leslie's entertaining and flamboyant depiction of him as the ecclesiastical doyen, Walsh's significance in shaping modern Ireland remains undisputed. Historians would, however, object to Leslie's loaded description of Walsh as 'the mitred head of opposition to English government in Ireland'.<sup>2</sup> Rather the pursuit of equality was the archbishop's guiding motivation. On returning to Dublin following his appointment as archbishop, he told a reception: 'you may always turn to me with confidence, not in your spiritual concerns only, but in your temporal troubles and difficulties as well, making me in all things without reserve the partner of your sorrows as well as of your joys'.<sup>3</sup> This essay aims to assess and contextualize Walsh's pivotal role in Irish life during his long episcopacy from 1885 to 1921 through the prism of that telling declaration. Unlike Leslie, the present author can draw on decades of archival-based scholarship on the Catholic Church, land, education, home rule and the pursuit of political independence – all defining features of Irish history but not rigorously investigated before the publication of *The shaping of modern Ireland*. In particular, the pioneering and voluminous work of the late Emmet Larkin on the interaction

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<sup>1</sup> Obituary comment in the *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Apr. 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Shane Leslie, 'Archbishop Walsh' in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The shaping of modern Ireland* (London, 1960), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Myles Ronan, *The Most Rev. W. J. Walsh* (Bray, 1927), p. 5.

of the Church, Irish nationalism and the British state revolutionized the understanding of this crucial nexus. Fortunately, two impressive biographies have charted the life and influence of Archbishop Walsh in far greater detail than this synthesized account permits.

## **2. Early life and career.**

The future archbishop was born on 30 January 1841 at 11 Essex Quay, the only child of Ralph Walsh, a watchmaker from County Kerry and Mary Pierce of Galway. An intimate of Daniel O'Connell, Ralph had his son enrolled in the Repeal Association at the age of nine months.<sup>4</sup> Walsh was educated first at a private school on Peter Street and then at St Laurence O'Toole's seminary school on Harcourt Street. There he acquired a love of music, mathematics and languages, and his academic prowess brought him to the attention of Cardinal Paul Cullen on prize-giving days. In 1855 he attended the Catholic University, then under the rectorship of John Henry Newman, and three years later entered St Patrick's College Maynooth. Cullen wished to send Walsh to Rome but he remained in Ireland at the wish of his parents. His scholastic career was exceptional and he advanced rapidly from student to professor of dogmatic and moral theology at the age of twenty-seven in 1867, a year after his ordination. A doctor of divinity degree followed in 1874. Possessed of a methodical and forensic mind, remarkable memory (he later mastered the Pitman script and other methods of aiding recall), diligence and wide-ranging erudition, the intellectual Walsh was a born professor imbued with a passion for minute detail and mastering abstruse subjects. These talents brought him to national prominence in July 1875 when called as an expert witness in canon law in the case of *O'Keeffe v McDonald*. This was the last of a series of much publicized actions initiated in the civil courts by Robert O'Keeffe, parish priest of Callan, against Cardinal Cullen (no less), the bishop of Ossory, and other clergymen. The cogency of Walsh's exposition drew praise from the judge and enhanced his burgeoning reputation. In the same year he acted as secretary to the first synod of Maynooth and theological adviser to several Irish bishops.

Walsh's administrative abilities made him the obvious candidate to fill the vice-presidency of Maynooth in June 1878 following the appointment of Daniel McCarthy as

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick J. Walsh, *William J. Walsh: archbishop of Dublin* (London, 1928), p. 2.

bishop of Kerry. Due to the disablement of Dr Charles Russell, following a fall from a horse, Walsh was also acting president and had to contend with the unsatisfactory state of the college's finances, a destructive fire, fund-raising for a college chapel and improvements to student accommodation. Russell's death opened the way for Walsh's advancement and he was confirmed as president in June 1880. The historian of Maynooth College described Walsh's presidency as 'judicious as well as firm'.<sup>5</sup> He was instrumental in the revival of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* in 1879 when its publication was transferred from Dublin to Maynooth. Until his death Walsh was a regular contributor on theological questions. A dread of preaching made the written word his métier. He contributed countless letters, interviews and pamphlets to newspapers and journals on a myriad of subjects but above was a vigilant guardian of his church's interests. As his secretary and first biographer noted, Walsh was a formidable adversary and skilled controversialist, who, on occasion, 'could be aggressive and scathing. He wielded with skill the weapons of his warfare, often selecting the club of mace in preference to the rapier in his controversial combats'.<sup>6</sup> Walsh's writing style was legalistic and occasionally tinged with polemic; he also had a penchant for pithy postscripts.

### **3. The tenants' champion.**

Although his greatest battles were fought in the sphere of education, Walsh's contribution to the land question was substantial. His national profile and the authority of his name soared following his appearance before the Bessborough Commission to inquire into Irish land tenure at the height of the Land War. He represented the trustees of Maynooth, who had been tenants of the duke of Leinster on Laraghbryan farm near the college but were evicted for refusing to sign the 'Leinster lease'. This agreement compelled tenants to contract out of the protections afforded by the 1870 land act. Walsh's evidence highlighted the absence of freedom of contract between tenant and landlord and underscored the pressing need to legislate for the 3Fs: fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale. The report of the commission largely accepted these observations and shaped Gladstone's revolutionary land act of 1881 which introduced the principle of co-partnership

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick J. Corish, *Maynooth College, 1795-1995* (Dublin, 1995), p. 231.

<sup>6</sup> Walsh, *William J. Walsh*, p. 25.

in the soil between landlord and tenant by granting the 3Fs. During the framing of the legislation Walsh's views were elicited by Hugh Childers, secretary of state for war and an amenable go-between as he favoured Irish self-government. Ever captivated by legal intricacies, Walsh published a much praised 147-page pamphlet – *A plain exposition of the Irish land act of 1881* – to make the technical and detailed provisions of the legislation intelligible for all. In 1885 he was consulted by Edward Gibson (Lord Ashbourne), whom he knew from the O'Keeffe case, while drafting his land purchase measure. Walsh stressed the necessity for moderate annuities over an extended timeframe, something incorporated in the act. Two years later Walsh suggested a roundtable conference of representatives of landlords and tenants to resolve the issue of land purchase. He was sixteen years ahead of his time; the Wyndham Act of 1903 was the product of such a consultation. Walsh's most famous and widely read pamphlet linked currency theory to the Irish land question: *Bimetallism and monometallism: what they are and how they bear upon the Irish land question* (1893).

#### **4. A political archbishop: appointment, Plan of Campaign, the fall of Parnell.**

A firm but strongly constitutional nationalist, Walsh shared the conviction of Archbishop Thomas Croke of Cashel, his mentor and confidante, that the people should not be lost to the church during the upheavals of the Land War. This attitude was not shared by Edward McCabe, who succeeded Cullen as archbishop of Dublin in 1879 and cardinal in 1882. He opposed the Land League, the Parnellite campaign for home rule, and the involvement of priests in political agitation. McCabe regularly condemned agrarian outrages, denounced the no rent manifesto in a pastoral letter in October 1881, and criticised the Ladies' Land League. His political stance found favour in Rome, at a time when Anglo-Vatican relations were improving, but not in Ireland where he was deemed to be under the influence of his Whig advisers. The increasingly isolated and unpopular cardinal died suddenly on 11 February 1885. Although Walsh had declined the see of Sydney two years earlier, he was 'both the popular choice and the outstanding candidate' to succeed McCabe.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas J. Morrissey, 'Walsh, William Joseph', *DIB*.

Walsh's preferment should have been straightforward but occasioned great controversy. Under canon law a vicar capitular is elected on the death of a bishop to administer the diocese until a new prelate is installed. Walsh was elected by a substantial majority of 12 out of 20 votes. On 10 March his name received the recommendation of 46 out of 63 parish priests for the vacant archbishopric. The Irish bishops, then in Rome on their *ad limina* visit, also pressed for Walsh's appointment, none more so than Croke. These efforts were opposed by George Errington, who tried to discredit Walsh and push for the appointment of Patrick Francis Moran, archbishop of Sydney and former bishop of Ossory. As the unofficial agent of the British government at the Vatican between 1880 and 1885, Errington kept the pope and the curia informed of the government's view of the Irish situation and helped secure a papal rescript forbidding priests from involvement in the Parnell testimonial fund in 1883. A strong intercession by Cardinal Manning, archbishop of Westminster, was required to convince Pope Leo XIII to appoint Walsh on 23 June 1885. He was consecrated on 2 August in the church of the Irish College in Rome. The appointment was hailed by Irish nationalists as a triumph against British intrigue.

McCabe's tenure was something of an interlude between those of the ecclesiastical leviathans of Cullen and Walsh. Although Armagh was the primatial see, Dublin was more important given the size of its Catholic population of over 380,000, proximity to the government, and the ecclesiastical seniority of its archbishop – both Cullen and McCabe had been cardinals. Archbishop Walsh's heraldic motto: *fide et labore* (by faith and labour) epitomized his episcopal style. He was the hierarchy's most able spokesman and by disposition 'could lead and unite others, not only by his strength of will and intellect but also by his manifest sincerity'.<sup>8</sup> Walsh's tactful stewardship during the illness of Archbishop Daniel McGettigan of Armagh helped unify the hierarchy. He was more temperate than Croke but like the archbishop of Cashel was conscious of the volatile political situation. Under Walsh's energetic leadership by the autumn of 1886 the Catholic bishops had endorsed the Irish Party's position on home rule and the system of purchase as a solution to

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<sup>8</sup> Ronan, *Walsh*, p. 10.

the land question. In return the bishops 'had an explicit undertaking ... that the initiative with regard to the education question on all its levels would rest with them'.<sup>9</sup>

Walsh supported the Plan of Campaign (1886-91) but not its violent excesses. This was an effort at collective bargaining on individual estates. Where rent reductions were not granted, tenants offered what they considered a fair rent. If this was not accepted by the landlord it was paid into an 'estate fund' to support tenants ejected for non-payment of rent. The Plan divided the hierarchy. Bishops O'Dwyer of Limerick and Healy of Clonfert dissented from Walsh's defence of the morality of tenants seeking a fair rent. The archbishop of Dublin was assailed by the Tory press for his alleged justification of illegal activity. The *Tablet*, the leading English Catholic paper, dubbed the policies of the Plan 'the doctrines of anarchy'.<sup>10</sup> The Vatican was alarmed and dispatched Monsignor Ignatius Persico on an investigative mission to Ireland in July 1887. The papal envoy did not grasp the intricacies of the land issue or Walsh's motivations in supporting the tenantry. His report regarded the archbishop of Dublin 'as much too politically-minded, too closely involved in public affairs through his association with the parliamentary party, the National League and Plan of Campaign and less committed to his pastoral work than he should have been'.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Persico admired the moderate nationalism and prudence of Michael Logue, who had been appointed archbishop of Armagh in December 1887. The hope that Logue might counterbalance Walsh's influence was not realized. Walsh was summoned to Rome and while there a papal rescript was issued condemning boycotting and the Plan. This was the product not simply of Persico's report but of the divisions within the Irish hierarchy and strong lobbying by the British government and English Catholics. In Ireland there was intense anger at perceived papal interference in political matters. Stunned and exasperated, Walsh was placed in an invidious position (there was even press speculation that he would resign). He reassured the pope that the decree would be obeyed by all good Catholics. On his return to Ireland Walsh dexterously finessed the distinctions between pronouncements

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<sup>9</sup> Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the creation of the modern Irish state, 1878-1886* (Dublin, 1975), p. 395.

<sup>10</sup> Ambrose Macaulay, *The Holy See, British policy and the Plan of Campaign in Ireland, 1885-93* (Dublin, 2002), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

on moral and political matters in an effort to comply with the decree, keep violent agitation in check, preserve nationalist unity (both lay and clerical), and maintain the church's influence (both religious and secular). In a letter to the rector of the Irish College in Rome, Walsh remarked that Irish Catholics 'might easily enough be brought into the same state of mind that now so manifestly prevails throughout the peoples of Italy, France and other so-called "Catholic" countries. The same influence is at work which has wrought such mischief there. We must be careful now lest we incur any share of the responsibility'.<sup>12</sup>

The papal rescript had one further painful humiliation for Walsh. In January 1893 he was denied the red hat despite the tradition of the archbishop of Dublin being so honoured, not to mention his undoubted leadership and administrative talents. Instead the archbishop of Armagh became a cardinal as did Persico. Logue was embarrassed by his unexpected elevation and considered it an honour bestowed on Armagh as primatial see rather than on him personally. By way of consolation, Bishop Patrick O'Donnell of Raphoe stressed the political freedom that Walsh retained by his remaining outside the college of cardinals. Publicly, Walsh gave no indication of his disappointment and graciously congratulated Logue. Historians have tended to dismiss the dour Logue and depict Walsh as the *de facto* leader of the Irish Catholic Church. In fact, as a recent biography of Logue makes clear, over two decades they maintained a strong friendship and an effective collaboration which held rumbustious colleagues such as O'Dwyer largely in check. Logue valued Walsh's advice above all others. The cardinal generally left the political direction of the hierarchy and the university campaign to Walsh, while he took responsibility for ecclesiastical discipline.

The fallout from the papal rebuke of the Plan of Campaign was overshadowed by the dramas surrounding Parnell. The first concerned the accusations made by *The Times* implicating the Irish Party leader in the Phoenix Park murders. Walsh was called as a witness by the special commission set up in 1888 to inquire into the claims. Famously, he deciphered an encoded cablegram which exposed the forgery of Richard Pigott and vindicated Parnell. The second drama was the bombshell of the O'Shea divorce case and the schism in the Irish Party in late 1890. Between the two episodes Walsh completed the construction of an archiepiscopal residence in Drumcondra, something first mooted by

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<sup>12</sup> Walsh to Tobias Kirby, 3 July 1888 (Irish College Rome, Kirby papers, no. 219) in Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 8.

Cullen who had acquired a site in 1861. A substantial, detached, two-storey over basement residence was designed by William Hague, a leading Catholic architect who knew Walsh from the reconstruction of St Mary's wing of Maynooth after it was destroyed by fire in 1878. Building work commenced in early 1889 and the archbishop took up residence in the 'brick palace' in October 1890. It was one of the first homes in the city lit by electric light. Walsh took a keen interest in the design of the library. To this end he visited Gladstone's library at Hawarden and used a modified version of the shelving system. One of the first conferences held in Walsh's library was the meeting of the episcopal standing committee on 3 December 1890 that condemned Parnell as unfit to lead the Irish people on moral grounds. This course was forced on Walsh by Parnell's refusal to stand down. He had initially counselled the hierarchy to hold fire in the hope that the party 'would give Parnell a quick and decent burial without need for episcopal interference'.<sup>13</sup> Privately, through Joseph Edward Kenny MP the archbishop sought unsuccessfully to persuade Parnell to withdraw and was greatly saddened by the split and the anti-clericalism it provoked.

### **5. *Pastor and educationalist.***

Walsh's active concern for the poor and the welfare of workers helped 'to overcome much of the residue of Parnellite hostility in the city's working class'.<sup>14</sup> The archbishop promoted the use of arbitration to resolve land and labour disputes, advocated the establishment of a Board of Conciliation and was often called to resolve labour disputes. For example, in August 1889 his mediation ended a protracted strike by builders' labourers in Dublin and in April 1890 he intervened in a bitter row on the Great Southern & Western Railway for which he was honoured with the freedom of Cork city. During the 1913 lockout his sympathies were with the workers and contrasted sharply with those of his secretary, Father Michael Curran, who in one letter suggested that the workers were 'not sufficiently starved' to see sense and call off the strike.<sup>15</sup> Through letters and other channels the archbishop pressed without success for a settlement. Walsh intervened decisively when a scheme to send children to England raised the spectre of proselytism. He condemned the

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<sup>13</sup> F. S. L. Lyons, *John Dillon: a biography* (Chicago, 1968), p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Morrissey, 'Walsh', *DIB*.

<sup>15</sup> Curran to Walsh, 26 Sept. 1913 (Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), Walsh papers, Bishops File 1913).



seemingly innocuous act of philanthropy in a letter to the press on 21 October 1913. Mothers were warned that they could 'no longer be held worthy of the name of Catholic mothers if they so far forget that duty as to send away their children to be cared for in a strange land, without security of any kind that those to whom the poor children are to be handed over are Catholics, or, indeed, are persons of any faith at all'.<sup>16</sup> That this occasioned little hostility towards Walsh personally was due to his compassion and practical concern for the sick, the homeless, the vulnerable and the poor. His priests also regarded him as just and considerate, albeit rather aloof in temperament. This was due to his obsession about optimizing the use of his time. When time could be spared, he enjoyed cycling, photography, music, astrology and exploring Europe during his annual vacation.

Of his many concerns Walsh was most preoccupied by education and as archbishop was the hierarchy's foremost advocate of Catholic rights. He served as commissioner of primary (1895-1901) and intermediate (1892-1909) education and played a decisive role in several important reforms. Under the Intermediate Education Act (1878), secondary education was promoted by holding public examinations, awarding exhibitions and certificates, and payment of fees to school managers based on results. Walsh grasped the immense opportunity this afforded Catholic secondary schools by organizing Catholic headmasters to participate in the new system. In primary and university education he sought equality of treatment for Catholics. Typically, he set out grievances in writing in the 421-page *Statement of the chief grievances of Irish Catholics in the matter of education, primary, intermediate and university* (1890) and *The Irish university question* (1897). Walsh was quite progressive and favoured the right of women to enter university and to vote. On the National Board he secured better remuneration for teachers and protection from arbitrary dismissal. The entitlement of Catholic training colleges to equal financial treatment was also won. Walsh refused to countenance the building of a cathedral until there was an adequate provision of schools in his archdiocese. He extended the pastoral infrastructure developed by his predecessors, as the Catholic population expanded to over 430,000 during his tenure, by increasing the number of parishes from 65 to 76 and building 70 new schools and extending 40 others.

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<sup>16</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Oct. 1913.

The most arduous campaign, in which Walsh was indefatigable, was for a university for Catholics. Although discussions with Michael Hicks-Beach and his successor as Irish chief secretary came to nought, the university question was sparked into life by a series of royal commissions in the opening years of the twentieth century. Walsh favoured the solution proposed by James Bryce of a single federal university containing Trinity, a catholic college and the existing queen's colleges. This proved unworkable, however. In 1908 Augustine Birrell oversaw the creation of not one but two new universities alongside Trinity. The National University of Ireland (NUI) accommodated Catholic concerns while Queen's University Belfast catered for nonconformists. The toil of working on the commission preparing for the new university caused Walsh to have a nervous breakdown. When the first meeting of the senate took place on 17 December 1908 the archbishop of Dublin was fittingly elected chancellor until curtailed by illness in 1915. The establishment of the NUI was the crowning achievement of Walsh's life.

#### **6. Disillusionment with the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party.**

During the 1890s the IPP was divided into squabbling Redmondite, Dillonite and Healyite factions. Walsh played a conciliatory role in helping to reunite the party in 1900 but by 1905 had withdrawn from politics and confined his public interventions to educational and religious matters. He was a staunch supporter of the language revival and gave the Gaelic League 'financial and moral aid at a time when it was looked at askance by politicians'.<sup>17</sup> In 1905 he encouraged the establishment of the Leinster training college to instruct teachers in the best methods of teaching the language and made an annual subscription of £10. As chancellor of the NUI, he had to contend with the heated Gaelic League campaign to have Irish accepted as a matriculation subject. The hierarchy favoured Irish as an optional rather than a required subject but it was eventually agreed that Irish would be compulsory for matriculation from 1913 onwards. In his final decade Walsh was afflicted by illness and poor health but when well manifested his characteristic tenacity. For instance in 1912 he was embroiled in a public quarrel with James Campbell, prominent barrister and Unionist MP for Trinity, over *Quantavis diligentia*, a papal rescript which forbade Catholics to compel ecclesiastics to attend civil tribunals. In refutation the

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<sup>17</sup> Walsh, *William J. Walsh*, p. 524.

archbishop produced a 110-page pamphlet: *The motu proprio "Quantavis Diligentia" and its critics*. This dispute attracted much publicity as it occurred during the third home rule episode.

Walsh shared Logue's ambivalence towards the IPP and silence on the third home rule bill. Neither had confidence in the party leadership believing it too fond of machine politics and bogus conventions, too secularist, too reliant on the Liberal Party and too willing to accept an attenuated home rule measure even at the price of partition. So chilly were relations between Redmond and Walsh that in March 1912 the IPP leader appealed to him to send a subscription to the home rule fund to arrest the damaging impression that the archbishop was out of favour with the third home rule bill. Walsh's reply was pointedly curt: 'It is now some years since I made up my mind to have nothing more to do with Irish politics and that nothing in the world could now induce me to change my mind in the matter.'<sup>18</sup> Walsh privately supported the measure but was critical of the provisions governing finance and reserved services. During the First World War he was sceptical of Allied propaganda and was steadfast in his refusal to have his office or church property associated with the war or recruitment. In January 1915, for example, both he and Logue refused to write an introduction to Cardinal Mercier's pastoral 'Patriotism and Endurance' lest propaganda be made of Belgian refugees. Even masses for the war dead were refused but with some exceptions such as the requiem held for Willie Redmond.

### **7. Final years: William the not so silent.**

Between 1916 and 1921 Walsh's public interventions were rare but spectacular. Like the vast majority of the hierarchy he made no comment on the Rising and accurately judged the public mood following the executions, arrests and internment. The prospect of partition as part of a home rule settlement spurred him to break a decade-long silence. In a letter to the *Irish Independent* on 27 July, under the headline 'Ireland being led to disaster', he deplored the IPP's lack of independence in parliament and its branding of all critics as "'factionalist", "wrecker" or "traitor"'<sup>19</sup>. A more devastating salvo followed in May 1917 during the South Longford by-election. An appeal against partition was organized by Bishop

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<sup>18</sup> Walsh to Redmond, 20 Mar. 1912 (DDA, Walsh papers, 377/1).

<sup>19</sup> *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1916.

McHugh of Derry and signed by sixteen Catholic (including Walsh) and three Church of Ireland bishops. In an explanatory letter to the *Dublin Evening Herald* on 8 May Walsh warned that 'anyone who thinks that partition, whether in its naked deformity, or under the transparent mask of "county option" does not hold a leading place in the practical politics of today, is simply living in a fool's paradise' and in a postscript added his belief that 'the country is practically sold'. Leaflets containing Walsh's letter were distributed at the polls and accompanied by the comment: 'this is a clear call from the great and venerated Archbishop of Dublin to vote against the Irish Party traitors and vote for Joe McGuinness!'<sup>20</sup> The timing of the letter had the effect of linking the partition issue to the Sinn Féin cause and contributed to McGuinness's narrow victory. In a letter to the rector of the Irish College, Walsh revealed that had he acted to turn the scale against the IPP 'renegades' who had led Ireland to 'universal shipwreck' and who, since the electoral reverse, assailed him 'up and down through the country, openly as "a liar"'!<sup>21</sup> Sensitive to the changing political tide, the archbishop made a further significant gesture in September 1917 when he sent his car to participate in the funeral procession for Thomas Ashe.

Walsh was sceptical about the prospects of the Irish Convention and like his brother bishops was fearful that increasing violence would end constitutionalism. In his Lenten pastoral in 1918 he reminded the faithful that the Church was strictly opposed to secret societies, including Fenians, as he had in 1915 and 1916. According to his secretary, the archbishop did not send a message of sympathy on the death of John Redmond in March 1918 and refused a requiem mass. During the conscription crisis Walsh played a pivotal role in persuading Logue to meet de Valera and other representatives of the Mansion House conference and form a clerical-nationalist collaboration against conscription. Walsh was a national trustee of the anti-conscription fund. As he had in the 1880s, he understood the popular will and for this reason, unlike Logue, supported Dáil Éireann as the democratic wish of the Irish people. At the 1918 general election he let it be known that he voted for the first time since becoming archbishop and backed Sinn Féin. During the War of Independence the hierarchy was fearful of lending moral sanction to either side in the

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Walsh to Michael O'Riordan, 16 June 1918 (Irish College Rome, O'Riordan papers, no. 19, letter 41) in Jérôme aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918: war and politics* (Dublin, 2003), p. 175.

deepening conflict. Walsh abjured violence but blamed coercive British policy in Ireland for the disturbed state of the country. In November 1919 through the medium of Cardinal O'Connell in New York he made a deliberately public donation to the Dáil loan and emphasized the restrictions imposed on Ireland. In 1920 he sought clemency for hunger strikers and Kevin Barry, celebrated a public requiem mass in Dublin for Terence MacSwiney, and condemned the Government of Ireland Act for making partition a reality. He used his last pastoral in 1921 to urge that 'our people may be strengthened to withstand every influence that would drive them ... into courses forbidden by the law of God'.<sup>22</sup>

Walsh died on 9 April 1921 at 32 Eccles Street and even in death appeared to remain in touch with the people. As his coffin left the pro-cathedral for burial in Glasnevin it was draped with the tricolour. Walsh's combination of extraordinary intellect, industry, indefatigable vigilance, political acumen and deeply-rooted nationalism equipped him to guide the hierarchy adroitly through the political turbulence of the period. Towering above his brother bishops, the very length of his episcopacy engendered a sense of stability and the perception of him as an institution. He was driven by a desire for equality and justice in the spheres of home rule, land ownership, education and labour relations. While Irish historiography has deepened and nuanced our knowledge of each of these areas, it has not diminished Archbishop Walsh's significance in the shaping of modern Ireland.

#### Further reading

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<sup>22</sup> Irish Catholic Directory 1922, pp 517-18.

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